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THE EVER-GROWING NEED OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Sandra Sokugawa[a]*

[a]*Burnaby School District 41 - Elementary Educator, 50 S. Gilmore Avenue Burnaby V5C 4P5, Canada*

Abstract

Over the past 25 years children's behaviors and expectations have changed to meet the times. A change in societal values and skills (e.g., 21st century skills) has affected the child's schema. This change in the child's schema has implications in the child's perception, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention. For this reason, there needs to be a conscious mindset shift to accepting the new value systems and the corresponding schemas that accompany them. As children of this new generation organize their daily lives, their schemas become altered to reflect the current societal environment resulting in children entering the schooling system with their perceptions, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention formed around the current state of society. For these children, their schemas are normal everyday life/interactions and are essentially the product of the new society who have adapted to their new situation. This adaptation has ultimately changed their schemas. Therefore, a shift in the perception of this new generation of children needs to take place, where their schemas should not be seen as maladaptive, but rather a reflection of the current ways of knowing. Influences such as technology and expectations of society have affected these schemas. Hence, a proactive perspective needs to be considered as schemas are highly adaptable and susceptible to the environment. One place that this can occur is with the K-12 school system. Together with a mind shift in accepting the present-day children and their schemas, a shift in the school system to meet this changing need must be considered.

Keywords: Social emotional learning, theory of mind, child development, sociocultural theory, schema theory

*Corresponding author.
E-mail address: sansokugawa@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable change in the schema/schemata development (Bartlett & Bartlett, 1995; Neisser, 1976; Powell & Carey, 2017) of children entering the K-12 school system and this is having a significant impact on learner development (Lecce et al., 2017; Powell & Carey, 2017). This change in schema is the result of multi-factorial social influences that impact the perception, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention of children. These influences include technology and modern-day conveniences (Limone & Toto, 2021), changing value systems, expectations of society, natural consequences, instant gratification, and a focus on egocentric attitudes and perspectives. Therefore, the social setting in which the child grows and develops is critical to how they perceive and interact with the world. This ultimately impacts children's social experiences, including how children navigate and interact within the school environment. Considering holistic implications impacts their future as learners and as humans/citizens.

Altered schema development also creates specific learning pathways in children (e.g., theory of mind). From a neuroscience perspective, the child's brain is continually developing into adulthood (Lebel & Deoni, 2018; Limone & Toto, 2021). Children's growth impact neural development of executive function (decision making), critical thinking, and social interaction. Within the past ten years, the schemas of children entering the school system are significantly different than children of previous generations (Powell & Carey, 2017). This article will explain that areas such as their basic skills, perception of others and situations, ability to self-regulate, and problem-solving skills are affected. For example, most previous generation children came to school possessing the ability to tie their shoelaces unlike most children currently entering the school system, including older children. While this may seem to be an insignificant skill, there are applications to future skills that include tying bows, packages, or apparel. As societies have changed, so too has the experiences of children, resulting in different patterns and associations of thought. In response to these changes, it is critical for parents and educators to consider that these children are simply organizing current experiences from the social world creating new schemas rather than maladaptive.

In response to these schemata changes, teachers need to find new ways to engage and interact with learners. Specifically, school systems need to explore alternate avenues of teaching to ensure that children maximize their potential as learners in the current generation. One potential avenue is Social Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL is a complex theoretical construct that encompasses neuroscience, psychology, social cognition, and human learning. As Tyng et al. (2017) note, emotional experiences are naturally present and found everywhere, and influence situations including on one's cognition. In particular, they note that emotions can have a strong influence on the ability to learn and remember, which have implications on academic and social outcomes, and therefore must be contemplated and thought out in the educational setting. In this paper, I will describe the societal factors influencing schemas of children entering the school system. Secondly, I will describe the reasons for the changing schemas. Thirdly, I will describe how schemas impact SEL. Finally, I will describe how and why SEL is imperative for children and their overall development. I will further propose how SEL can be implemented for children to develop schemas that lead to becoming resilient adults who build flexible skillsets.

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2. The Multi-Factorial Natures of Schema Development

2.1. Modern Schema Development

2.1.1. Schema Theory

Examining how experiences shape the development of individuals leads to the hypothetical construct of Schema Theory (Bartlett & Bartlett, 1995; Neisser, 1976; Pankin, 2013). Schema Theory is a construct that explains the way in which individuals are able to cognitively organize experiences based on the interactions with knowledge and previous experiences (Arbib, 1992; Bartlett & Bartlett, 1995). Schemas are the way the brain organizes information based on an individual's experiences (Bartlett & Bartlett, 1995). Pankin (2013) notes that a "unit of knowledge" is based on previous experiences which helps to make sense of the new experience. Schemas help individuals to interpret new situations and information while continuing to develop and reshape itself (i.e., accommodation and assimilation) based on these new experiences (i.e., stored memory templates). Utilizing these stored templates, an individual's schemas can help to anticipate and make plans (Neisser, 1976), which allow individuals to navigate their current social situations.

Schemas can be broad or specific and can continually adapt and change to incorporate new experiences. On the other hand, if individuals are not exposed to a multitude of experiences, schemas can be limited in scope. New experiences are critical to the development of individual schemas. People who are deprived of new experiences could find gaps in specific schemata. These gaps are the result of lost points of reference within specific contexts. A lack of new experiences will keep the schema stagnant and underdeveloped. For example, children who are not taught to challenge themselves in new situations show a fear of challenges. This can further result in a schemata that promotes hesitancy due to fear of making mistakes. Therefore, it is important that children are exposed to a variety of new experiences that will continue to strengthen previous skills while overcoming challenges to learn new skills.

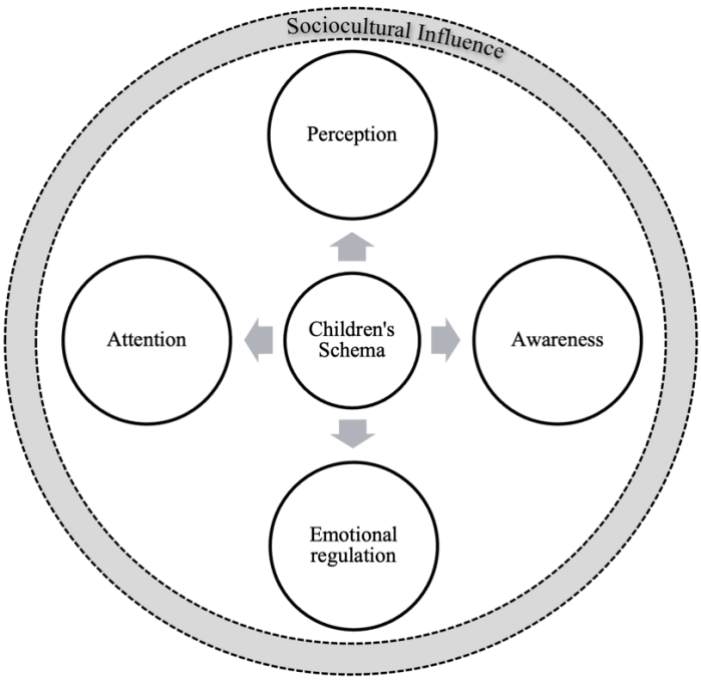

Figure 1. Children's Schema affect their perception, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention

Considering Figure 1, a child's schema is comprised of their perception, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention. Given the importance of all four components to children's learning and memory (Baddeley & Hitch, 2000; Lecce et al., 2017) it is clear to see how critical schema development is and how different generations, cultures, and experiences can develop different mental pictures.

From a sociocultural theory perspective, Vygotsky (1980) believed that each generation makes adaptations to meet the needs of the present generation (Lantolf, 2000). These adaptations are not limited to physical or visible states. They include the inner cognitive and social cognitive development of children and how they integrate information. A commonly held belief, within and across school districts alike, is manifesting in children of the present-day society; particularly, related to Theory of mind (ToM). ToM is how humans make sense of their world through their thoughts, beliefs, emotions, desires, perceptions, intentions, and other mental states (Flavell, 2004; Lecce et al., 2017). Additionally, ToM is critical to how humans interact and show awareness of others and will be discussed in the following section.

2.2. Theory of Mind (ToM)

ToM, as previously mentioned, is how humans make sense of the world through their own mental states such as their thoughts and beliefs. These include thoughts and beliefs of oneself and others (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985). Flavell (2004) describes the characteristics of the different stages of ToM that children experience from birth to the age of five. From an early age, infants begin to pay attention (i.e., observe and mimic) to things within their ever-expanding environment. Infants can mimic emotional states that parents and caregivers display even though they may not have a full understanding of those emotions. Moving forward to the preschool ages (3-5), children's neural, psychological, and physical continues to grow where they begin to develop greater awareness and visual perception. This is the stage where children begin to notice and verbalize emotional states, and when ToM traditionally takes shape. For example, when other people shift their gaze pre-school children learn to look in the same direction, showing early signs of ToM. Further to this point, preschool age children begin verbalizing their desires and seeing correlations between the emotions of receiving or not receiving their desires. These stages of ToM, however, occur when children are exposed to a variety of experiences that enhance ToM to take place.

Exposure or lack of exposure to children's social and emotional learning experiences within their initial social circle can have significant impacts on the ToM. This shows the strength of human adaptability, emphasizing that even small alterations can have positive or negative impacts on children's development (Hashmi et al., 2020; Lecce et al., 2017; Segrin et al., 2013). Lending from animal studies, Premack and Woodruff (1978) coined the term Theory of Mind to represent what Baron-Cohen et al. (1985) noted as "a crucial aspect of social skills, namely being able to conceive of mental states: that is knowing that other people know, want, feel, or believe things" (p.38). Then, lending from autism studies, where children with autism show a lack of ToM skills (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Berenguer et al., 2018), children in the current generation are exhibiting similar tendencies without necessarily being diagnosed on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This could be the result of changing play habits (readily available digital games or augmented reality games) or a lack of organic pretend play in childhood that includes social interaction (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Campbell et al., 2018). Lack of experiences in this case could link ToM with Schema. One of the reasons that children's schemas are different today is specifically because pretend play is lacking (Campbell et al., 2018; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009; Singer & Singer, 2009b, 2009a; Wood &

Attfield, 2005). Play has been an important component in children's development, particularly in strengthening problem solving skills, creativity, and emotional well-being (Hashmi et al., 2020; Meeks & Mauldin, 1990).

2.3. The causes of the changing schema

2.3.1. The over-programmed child

With technology and the availability of information, the selection for opportunities has increased. For financially stable families, children can have opportunities in a variety of activities such participating in team or individual sports or taking cultural or fine arts lessons. Unfortunately, many present-day children are involved in several activities at one time. Even from a young age, many of these activities require much involvement and time. Some parents feel pressure from other parents to enroll their children in activities while other parents feel that structured activities are more beneficial than unstructured activities (Meeks & Mauldin, 1990). Often, many children are involved in more than one activity leading them to be occupied with extracurricular activities on a consistent basis. Furthermore, if the family has more than one child, it becomes a juggling act to ensure that each child can fully participate in their own activities while feeling the effects of their siblings' activities. To accommodate the children, parents may 'divide and conquer' where each parent decides who they will take where. The juggling and balancing between all the children requires careful planning for efficiency and maximization of time. It may even be the case where all the children attend each activity to ensure less chaos, resulting in a lack of unstructured play time. This has potential to limit experiences which ultimately skew schemas to a more limited scope and limit valuable points of reference.

This careful planning of activities leads each child to feel a need to complete all activities (Segrin et al., 2013). Indirectly, children are programed to go from one activity to the next. As children can adapt mentally, physically and socially, they understand their own schedules and often understand their sibling's schedules. Being over-scheduled may result in social, cognitive, and emotional development being delayed (Meeks & Mauldin, 1990). This delay can be seen where children have difficulty spontaneously responding to dynamic situations. In addition, these children often need reassurance, instant feedback, and/or recognition of completion as they demonstrate a sense of hesitancy (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2017). Furthermore, these children often require assistance in identifying, anticipating, and completing subsequent steps even if the subsequent steps may appear logical. A lack the confidence prevails in determining the next natural step in whatever needs to be done. It will require some time until these children have unscheduled experiences that will allow them to become confident enough without needing reassurance or acknowledgments from parents or caregivers (i.e., adults).

2.3.2. Hovering Adults

As schemas are developed through experiences, it is important to give children the responsibility to take ownership of their things. "Helicopter parenting" (Odenweller et al., 2014) leads to children becoming more dependent on others such as parents or grandparents. An example of hovering adults is when adults carry the children's backpacks to school. It may be argued that children are little and find it difficult to carry, but at what age do adults stop carrying the backpacks? Adults must have more patience and understanding to allow children in gaining more experiences instead of doing it for them. This simple act

translates to taking away an opportunity for developing a sense of responsibility. It is without a doubt easier for adults to carry the backpack as they are stronger, have more practice, and are 'helping' children (Gagnon et al., 2020). A sense of children making mistakes or a 'sense of failure' is prevalent when adults do things for children. Again, doing things for children have long lasting implications as opportunities are taken away from children. Children carrying their own backpack instills a sense of ownership and responsibility in minute ways. Parents and grandparents are not the individuals attending school, so the responsibility related to attending school needs to be on the children, not the adults.

Another example of hovering parents is when children forget something at home. Upon realization, the adults will bring the forgotten item to school. Therefore, the natural consequence of the forgotten item is not actualized. Learning to take ownership and responsibility needs to be nurtured if adults want children to grow up to be responsible adults. Taking responsibility that the item was forgotten at home and then bearing the consequence that arises from this action will give children the experience that may lead to future alterations in better organization. Preparation and organization are the two skills that are not practiced in this particular scenario and cannot be practiced as the natural consequence were not allowed to occur. The irony is that when items are forgotten at home and is brought to school, the parents will remark that the children are 'not responsible'. Macdonald (2021) notes that children who have not been given choices or a sense of independence experience low self-confidence and feel ill-prepared leading to anxiety and depression. Furthermore, when children do activities that parents have chosen for them, the same results can be seen (Macdonald, 2021). Therefore, parents need to question why the children are not responsible simply because they expect children to be responsible by a certain age. Children do not magically become responsible, so schemas need to be developed based on the individual's experiences. For this reason, behaviours that demonstrate responsibility need to be taught, modeled, and experienced. Ultimately, children need to experience opportunities that nurture responsibility and overcoming obstacles and challenges.

2.3.3. Unclear boundaries

The social world has rules and limits where individuals must abide by the social construction. As individuals grow to adulthood, there is an expectation that these need to be followed. Schema development is shaped through experiences and children need to have experiences that will help nurture an understanding of what rules and limits are. This will create a point of reference in which to gauge from and then help guide children in their discoveries and explorations (Hoffman et al., 2021; MacKenzie, 2010).

Presently, with modern day children, these boundaries have become blurred (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015). As a result, within the daily experiences that children have (e.g., play and educational experiences, experiences with parents), the lack of structure and blurring of boundaries is creating schemas that limit integration opportunities (Hashmi et al., 2020). For example, children who are surrounded by uninterrupted attention from parents, grandparents, and other adults in their lives become accustomed to that attention. The difficulty is when children enter school, the undivided attention becomes significantly less in a classroom. This impacts the child's ToM (i.e., awareness of others' needs and feelings) due to the egocentric focus on the child within the family setting.

From a family situation where the child gets all or most of the attention, expecting to receive the same kind of attention is not possible in a classroom setting where there is one teacher and many students.

When children enter the school system, a good understanding of ToM is necessary so that children will not expect the teacher's undivided attention instantaneously as they may get at home. For this reason, exposure to boundaries and rules from a younger age will develop ToM and develop schemas with ToM experiences, aiding in the ability to perform seemingly simple tasks such as waiting patiently for their turn (Lecce et al., 2017). This is simply one example of how schema experiences are critical to social functioning.

Children gather information through discovery and exploration. With an understanding of boundaries, children can figure out the world around them, including appropriate language and action discourse or behaviours (MacKenzie, 2010). In addition to undivided attention, the current generation of children are often exposed to instant gratification and frequently are quickly given what they desire. This is often to avoid boredom within the child and parents generally use technology to placate a disruptive child (e.g., tablets in restaurants, waiting in a queue). These behaviours create schemas that develop children who are unable to deal with boredom situations and become accustomed to having their desires met by adults immediately.

Schemas that are accustomed to little or no understanding of boredom situations lead to heuristics that prevent children from being able to wait their turn, develop patience, or deal with situations of boredom. In past generations children played without a great deal of parent interventions which resulted in more independent schemas that allowed children to develop experience-based problem-solving skills. It is natural for parents to give children what they desire but providing experiences that reinforce boundaries, help children develop a sense of self-control and responsibility. Being able to show self-control and responsibility allows children, and people in general, to have freedom (Cloud et al., 1998; Milyavskaya & Inzlicht, 2017). Children are not born with an understanding of boundaries and need to acquire this understanding through various experiences from direct teaching by the adults in their lives (Cloud et al., 1998; Hoffman et al., 2021). Instant gratification alters a child's schema and hinders their abilities to develop their ToM and to be able to follow social cues and rules.

2.3.4. Fixed mindsets

Parents have great influence on children's lives and the choices that they make can have lasting implications. When experiences of children entering the school system are limited, so too are the children's schemas. The concept of fixed and growth mindsets is a concept that Carol Dweck and her colleagues studied with regards to how students dealt with challenges (Mindworks, 2017a). Fixed mindsets and growth mindsets are two opposing sides of how to approach learning. A fixed mindset is the belief that things remain unchanged, whereas a growth mindset is a belief that through hard work, learning from others, and learning different strategies can be developed over time (Mindworks, 2017a).

An example of parental influence is the way in which children have been encouraged. Haimovitz and Dweck (2017) note that phrases that focus on the intelligence of children tend to give the impression that intelligence is a fixed trait. Phrases such as 'You're so smart,' 'That's great', or 'You're good at that', encourages a fixed mindset (Mindworks, 2017b; Locke et al., 2012). With a growth mindset, achievement in school is greater in challenging situations (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017) with phrasing such as, 'I can see that you are working really hard,' focused on the process promote a growth mindset (Mindworks, 2017b). The growth mindset phrases validate and build a sense of self in children while encouraging them to continue developing and growing (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). Children are impressionable and humans

in general learn things indirectly all the time from what is observed and modeled. Influence can be powerful and quite effective, so through indirect teachings of observations, children acquire knowledge. With a lack of experience, children are not able to distinguish what is appropriate and what is not. They need adults to help guide and nurture them so they can develop schemas that will help them learn to make appropriate choices.

The ultimate goal of learning for any individual is to apply what they learn to the world around them. Parents are the first 'teachers' in children's lives. When children enter the school system, the learning from parents continue with parents' informal teachings, but classroom teachers become an additional component with formal instructions. Imparting education, informal and formal, is with the hopes of instilling individuals to "take initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). By guiding and encouraging children using growth mindset phrases will help to instill nurture a sense of self-initiation to cultivate their schemas that they will continue to learn and grow.

2.3.5. Technology for children

The modern digital era has made information and resources readily available. There are advertisements that entice children to want toys and games but also encourage parents to buy and download apps that are 'educational' for children. Social media platforms for older children are also becoming popular and widely used and, in many instances, have a younger audience using it with adult 'supervision'. Furthermore, parents often give their child a device to watch a show or play a game while having to wait or when they are in transition from one place to another. The consumerism that occurs with the digital era is not only for adults, but for children as well. Digital technology is having an impact on children's self-control, as shown above, by impacting their ToM and their ability to understand boundaries (Limone & Toto, 2021). Self-control is a skill that must be developed over time, but for children who have not had enough experience dealing with self-control have difficulty. Children need to be given opportunities to develop their schemas with an emphasis on self-control. With the current generation, digital technology often emphasizes instant gratification and the child's ability to continuously indulge. Specifically, issues such as smartphone addiction, anxiety, social isolation, depression, and loneliness are on the rise in children and adults (Ostic et al., 2021). Research is showing that in addition to the mentioned issues, sleep disturbances and poor health are other issues that are linked to high consumption of technology (Limone & Toto, 2021; Ponti et al., 2017). Some research has also suggested that more than the recommended amount of television watching prior to the age of three years can cause cognitive adverse reactions (Gottschalk, 2016; Ponti et al., 2017). Therefore, parents must be cognizant of how technology can affect brain development. Technology is clearly impacting the social world of all humans particularly during the developmental years from 3-20-years of age when children's schema development is at specific risk.

2.4. The consequences of the changing schema

The new schema is different and to the older generations, it may appear that the present-day children are stifled from previous generation children. This is a result of the limited experiences and a lack of valuable experiences necessary in the functioning of the day-to-day occurrences. For example, many

children presently lack resilience and problem solving skills (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; Steiner & Dahlquist, 2021), demonstrate an inability to handle loss or defeat, demonstrate an inability to wait for their turn, get easily upset when things do not go their way, demonstrate an inability to sustain focus, expect everyone to attend to their needs but do not reciprocate back, expect that everything they do is "fun" and be entertained all the time, and see boredom as something negative rather than an opportunity to find something else to do. There is a lack of understanding of natural consequences during childhood and adolescences which will then carry into adulthood. In adulthood, there are many situations that incur natural consequences, and can often come with a heavy price tag.

Using a previous example with respect to a forgotten item at home, if this practice continues (adults bringing the forgotten item each time), then the schema will develop to reflect this scenario that the problem can be easily rectified. The schema will not show a correlation between an action and a natural consequence that should follow but rather a skewed one. Experiences, both good and bad, are necessary to help people handle challenges and adversities. Every opportunity that children can experience must be viewed as a way to develop their schema. With the children presently entering the school system, they have not had the opportunities to become familiar with the valuable experiences that will help equip them to function in the day-to-day occurrences. For this reason, SEL is even more crucial for the present-day children so that they may grow up with a better understanding of themselves in relation to the world around them by allowing them to encounter any situation and know what to do.

2.4.1. Neuroscientific implications of the new schema

There are neuroscientific implications for the causes of the new schema laid out earlier in this article. One of the negative implications of the modern-day conveniences of receiving instant reaction is creating a feeling of gratification from the various social media platforms. Receiving positive reactions creates a positive stimulus in wanting to continue the behaviour (Bozarth, 1994; Xia et al., 2021). The positive reactions triggers the dopamine levels to rise in the brain positively affecting the body (Bozarth, 1994). This is a natural reaction to pleasurable things and the positive feelings encourage individuals to continue their action. However, when there is a loss of flexibility and an inability to demonstrate self-control, addiction can occur (Esch & Stefano, 2004). For an ideal human mind, there needs to be integration, balance, strong core, strength, and flexibility (Kang, 2014). The brain's ability to form, restructure, and function is known as neuroplasticity, and is dependent on experience (Limone & Toto, 2021). Much of the neuron connections and brain development occurs more during childhood and adolescence than adulthood (Kang, 2014; Limone & Toto, 2021). For this reason, the experiences that children and adolescents have impact the brain development and the use of technology can have severe developmental implications (Limone & Toto, 2021). Therefore, allowing for children to experience a healthy balance of play, work, and sleep is key in the healthy development of the child.

3. Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

3.1. Definitions

SEL is a complex theoretical construct that is a combination of neuroscience, psychology, social cognition, and human learning. Having a self-concept of SEL is necessary for any form of learning to take place and is a critical component of how children navigate their social world. Therefore, it is critical to have

a working definition of SEL to comprehensively discuss it within this paper. For the purposes of this paper, SEL will be defined according to each of the three separate components of social cognition, emotions, and learning.

First, adapting from Bless and Greifeneder (2017), Watson and Sokugawa (in press) describe social cognition as a process that individuals use to "make sense of their social and emotional development." This process then allows individuals to build schemas based on the semantic and episodic memories which helps to interpret, appraise, and synthesize emotions. Being able to interpret their emotions helps to conduct appropriate behaviours that can ultimately leads to maintaining relationships. An ability to maintain healthy relationships then impacts a learner's identity and fit within a community. In the class under the SEL umbrella, children need to be given experiences that focus on the development of social cognition and emotional regulation.

Second, adapting from Rolls (2000), Jarvis et al. (2003), Moors et al. (2013), Scherer (2009), and CASEL, Watson and Sokugawa (in press) describe emotions as responses that are neural, physical, and social to a stimulus, and are based on the intensity and duration producing arousal that are physiological, hormonal, and psychological. These emotions of individuals are stimulated through experiences of the social world, A community is based on the members' needs, goals, values, and general well-being, and the emotions can be constructive or destructive in meeting a need, reaching a goal, or upholding a value.

Finally, adapting from Wenger (1999), Jarvis et al. (2003), Owens and Tanner (2017), and (Herculano-Houzel, 2002), Watson and Sokugawa (2022 in press) describe learning as "a complex process that occurs twice". The first time occurs socially through a direct experience with the environment. The second time occurs when the individual transforms that experience into their existing schemas of their senses, knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions, values, and beliefs. In essence, the learning is a neural event that needs to be applied into everyday life in a holistic manner and contextually transferred to the learner's world.

These experiences that often occur in the classroom require children to be exposed to the skills involved in building an individual's awareness and understanding of their own SEL. This understanding helps the students not only navigate through the school system but ultimately in their adult lives. Further, SEL aides in acquiring new skills and knowledge while helping to strengthen and build onto what is already known. It is important to remember that the acquisition of knowledge, (i.e., learning), does not only happen within the classroom but can occur anywhere. One must be aware and open to accepting any learning opportunities that are presented to them for learning to occur. This openness will lead to experiences being actualized. Therefore, having a self-concept of SEL is necessary if learning is to take place.

As previously mentioned, SEL is complex and multi-faceted. It incorporates three separate components of social cognition, emotions, and learning. Learning opportunities for individuals to understand how to self-regulate their emotions helps individuals to build and maintain relationships (Knowles, 1975). Further, it is important to keep in mind that the emotional center of the brain is the most primal and is directly related to memory and learning (Tyng et al., 2017) where the memories and learning that take place help to form the child's schema.

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3.2. SEL in Practice

When the children's experiences are lacking in the area of ToM prior to the enrollment of school, the responsibility of developing a ToM schema unfortunately falls on the school system. Developing and strengthening the skills of social cognition and emotion regulation now are placed onto the classroom teachers. This means that the classroom teachers are given the responsibility of delivery the content material expected of them, but also for teaching the foundational skills of how to interact with others in an appropriate manner through self and emotional regulation. SEL is an avenue that can be pursued in the classroom setting to build and nurture these foundational skills. Particularly, teaching and nurturing the skills needed to build learning communities is one component of SEL that will help develop schema that strengthens ToM. Creating learning communities that help develop self and social awareness will help children learn to manage their emotions and behaviours so that they can make responsible decisions (Brackett et al., 2019). This will help in building positive relationships with others and ultimately result in learning to take place.

In a classroom, the environment is like a 'family' where there is a parent-like figure and sibling-like figures. The only difference is that there is only one parent and multiple siblings who are at similar ages. A classroom environment becomes the natural setting to bring awareness to children like the home environment, but different from reality. For example, the students need to navigate through the idea that they may not receive the immediate attention they seek as there are many more children than they are used to at home. Learning to wait for an appropriate time to interrupt or receive assistance may take longer than what the child expects as the number of students can vary. Taking this example, it is evident that a ToM is prudent in classroom situations where children need to assess the situation and make appropriate subsequent decisions. Therefore, teachers need to teach the skills based on establishing a learning community where the community is based on four elements (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These elements are membership (sense of belonging), influence (what matters to them matters to others), needs being met through integration (sharing of resources by being part of the membership), and an emotional connection with others through common experiences (Brackett et al., 2019; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Building the community takes effort from all members to work together in nurturing and strengthen the community. The basic skills needed in building community are the four listed in Figure 1, perception, awareness, emotional regulation, and attention.

With present-day children (possessing a new schema) who are lacking the ToM understanding, the teacher will need to teach the students the various skills associated with ToM such as awareness and perception of self and others so that the students are able to have a better understanding of their intentions and beliefs (Flavell, 2004). This will assist the students to perceive what their emotions and emotion of others are trying to communicate. Then the students can take the context of what is happening around them with the emotions that they and others are showing to make choices in their decision-making process (Ashiabi, 2000; Tyng et al., 2017).

In addition to developing an awareness and perception of themselves and others, teachers need to teach and encourage children the concept of gratitude. With societal changes, things that seem insignificant often get overlooked. One example is the 'right' that children in Western countries have in attending school. In many countries, children cannot attend school for a variety of reasons. The idea of 'freedom' is another thing that people often take for granted, but for many people in the world, this is not remotely possible even

in the twenty-second century. With many children who have become accustomed to being 'given everything', they come to expect things. Teaching children to stop and take note of what they have and be grateful is something that takes practice and needs to be nurtured. Showing gratitude can be done by saying 'thank you', giving a gesture of appreciation such as a smile, holding the door open for someone, or helping someone without being prompted to do so are a few actions of gratitude that can be shown without much effort. Demonstrating and modeling a sense of humanity and kindness without expecting anything in return will help children to develop their schemas.

Next, teaching children to become aware of oneself and others leads to teaching children to reflect on their actions. Teaching this skill allows children to become more aware of how they behave and how their behaviours impact others. Further, teaching children self-regulation strategies will help them to know what specifically needs to be done (Brackett et al., 2019; Kaunhoven & Dorjee, 2017). In essence, this teaches children to become more responsible by being aware of self and others and know what they need to do so that optimal learning can take place. Teaching children to self-regulate can then help them to build and maintain relationships that will help in facilitating the world around them. If children can learn this at an early age and develop their schemas to reflect this ability to self-regulate, children will become resilient individuals who will be able to use their executive functioning skills, critically think, and have healthy social interactions.

Finally, the teacher will need to teach what attention is and strategies to help sustain attention. Such strategies include learning to listen attentively to others and with awareness and perception helps to develop an understanding that others have ideas that may be similar or different from one's own. The teacher needs to purposefully practice and nurture this so that the students' schemas can become attuned to this behaviour. Children again need to become more aware of what their bodies and mind are doing while respectfully listening when others are speaking. Schemas need to be nurtured with experiences that will help with this development. Purposeful listening is a skill that demonstrates respectful behaviour. It is also a lifelong skill that is needed for all facets of life so that individuals will know what is happening and know what to do.

4. Conclusion

The schemas of present-day children are changing due to significant societal changes. Schemas are adaptable and to accommodate this change in children's schemas, schools must incorporate SEL into the curriculum. Evolution is inevitable and occurs in many facets of life. With more knowledge, progress usually follows. However, in the case of the present-day children, progress of society has led to negative repercussions. The development that occurs in children during the first few years of life is essential in the development that will continue during childhood and adolescence by providing opportunities for new experiences they encounter through growth and development. For this reason, it is crucial that development takes place with the mindset that each experience is another step in helping to build a solid foundation. Furthermore, the technological advances and the brisk evolution of the digital era has also added to the complexities of today's world and the development of the present-day children (Lipton et al., 2018). Experiences that develop robust schemas allow children to build healthy social emotional learning skillset and must be considered both prior to school entry and throughout a child's formal schooling years. These experiences help shape who the individual is and everything about them including the way they think, behave, and feel. Therefore, the education system, the education programs, and educators need to consider

the social cultural environment as it relates to schema development and the psychological development of children.

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